



San Mateo County Election Observer Program

Purpose

San Mateo County welcomes all observers. The primary purpose and intent of the Election Observer Program is to provide an avenue for public observation and encourage involvement in the election process. This ensures that the election process is transparent, accurate and secure, which in turn, encourages voter participation and confidence.

Invite

Prior to each election, the Elections Office invites the following groups to observe all of the processes at the Elections Office:

San Mateo County Grand Jury Members
Political Party Officers
Advocacy Groups
Ethnic & Minority Groups
League of Women Voters
Media
Candidates
Jurisdictions with Candidates and/or Measures on the ballot

Any group or individual expressing an interest in observing Election processes is welcome to participate in the Observer Program. A copy of the Observer Handbook will be provided to each observer. An electronic copy of this handbook is available on the Elections website, www.shapethefuture.org, as well.

Letters of introduction are prepared for interested participants who want to visit polling places on Election Day. Participants are also provided with a list of all of the polling places within the county and the central counting location and its hours of operation.

Overview

In general, observers meet with election staff initially to get an overview of the election process and/or request to see specific items or processes. This helps to ensure that observers have a more meaningful experience; staff members will be assigned to provide an overview of a specific process and field observer questions. This initial meeting provides an opportunity to explain when and where processes will occur. Observers are welcome to visit any and all of the processes or locations. The primary locations are:

- Main Elections Office 40 Tower Road, San Mateo
- 555 County Center, 1st Floor, Redwood City (during the 29-day early voting period)
- Training sessions for Election Officers (various locations in the county and at the Elections Office, 40 Tower Road, San Mateo)
- Polling places throughout the county on Election Day

Election activities and procedures open to observers:

Pre-Election Day

- Security Measures and Products
 - View the card key access log for the Vote by Mail work area and the Warehouse.
 - View the access logs for the vaults where ballots and security seals are stored.
 - View the time stamped video footage from the Security Camera in the Lobby.
 - View the Tally Room where ballots are created and votes are tallied.
 - Learn about the Two-Person-Integrity requirements in ballot storage areas.
- Logic and Accuracy Testing (L&A)
 - Watch the testing of the accuracy of the:
 - eSlate electronic voting equipment
 - Ballot Now paper ballot voting equipment (optical scanners)
 - Review final reports of L&A results.
 - Note: All equipment must be verified as one hundred percent accurate before it is used in the conduct of an election.*
- Functional Testing of the eSlate Electronic Voting Equipment
 - Watch the functional testing of the eSlate-voting equipment, the JBC-ballot issuing component, and the VBO-paper printer.
- Predefinition of the eSlate voting equipment
 - Watch the process where each eSlate, JBC, and VBO is assigned to a specific precinct, scanned, and sealed. At that time, each JBC is issued a custody log that travels with it throughout the election, documenting its secure handling.
- Election Officer Training
 - Attend any of the three different types of classes offered to the varying levels of Election Officers: Beginners, Intermediate and Experienced.
 - Visit the dedicated Training Lab that gives Election Officers the opportunity to get hands on experience with the voting equipment and practice their skills.
- Vote by Mail Processing
 - View our Pitney Bowes Relia-Vote system that is used to sort the returned Vote by Mail ballots in precinct order.
 - View the signature verification process for returned vote by mail ballots.
 - View the ballot removal process from the returned vote by mail ballot envelopes that begins 11 calendar days before an election.
 - View the scanning of Vote by Mail ballots, which also begins 11 calendar days before an election. Ballots are scanned; however, vote counts are not totaled or released before the 8 p.m. on Election Day.

- Voting Centers

Visit one of the two Voting Centers in the 29 days prior to the Election and on Election Day to observe voting on the eSlates or paper ballot.

The Voter Center locations are located at:

555 County Center, 1st Floor, Redwood City
40 Tower Road, San Mateo

- Voter Outreach

Watch the way we interact with voters away from the Elections Office.

Read (and/or subscribe) to the San Mateo County Elections blog, "Inside Elections," on our website, www.shapethefuture.org. It chronicles the preparations made by the Elections Office for the upcoming election.

Read (and subscribe) to our Twitter feed, Election News Now. It offers the reader bite-sized election news updates throughout the day.

Ask about the work the Elections Office is/has done with various county organizations that are registering citizens to vote.

Learn about how the Elections Office reaches out to members of the military, their dependents and citizens living temporarily and permanently overseas. We inform them of their right to obtain a Vote by Mail ballot using the Federal Post Card Application and their right to vote a Vote by Mail Ballot by fax or mail if they do not receive their original ballot.

Election Day

- Visit Polling Places (6:00 a.m. 9:00 p.m.)
 - Observe the set-up and/or the close of the polls.
 - Observe the conduct of the election at any precinct on Election Day.
- Watch and listen to the operators in the Phone Bank answer queries from voters who call the Voter Hotline. (6:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m.)
- Watch and listen to the Field Tech hot line providing phone support to the Election Officials on Election Day. (6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)
- Observe the return and processing of JBCs, Red Supply Cases and Blue Ballot Boxes to the Elections Office after the polls close. (8:30 – until all precincts have reported).
 - Watch as the JBCs are scanned, security seals are verified and chain of custody logs are inspected before any further processing of the ballots occurs. If all security seals are intact and the custody log is complete, the JBC is transferred to the secure area where the Mobile Ballot Box (MBB) cards (electronic disks containing live ballots cast at the polls on the eSlates) are removed and taken to the Tally Room for counting.
 - Monitor the return of the Blue Ballot Boxes that contain voted paper ballots as they are scanned and accepted before being placed on the precinct warehouse supply grid for storage and counting during the Official Canvass.
 - Watch the return of Red Supply Cases; see how each case is scanned back into Warehouse inventory to account for its whereabouts.
- Observe Election Night Tally Room Processes by viewing through computer monitors that replicate what's taking place inside the Tally Room.

Post Election Day

- Observe the process by which election officials verify the eligibility of Provisional and Vote by Mail Ballots.

- Understand how a Provisional Voter is deemed eligible to have his/her vote counted.
- Understand when and how Ballot Duplication is undertaken.
 - View the process of “copying” a ballot that was unreadable by the scanner or was voted provisionally by a voter who voted in the wrong precinct.
- Learn about the Ballot Reconciliation process.
 - View how the Elections Office audits and accounts for every ballot issued. The types of ballots include electronic and paper ballots that were voted, challenged, provisional or unused ballots.
- View or participate in the selection of Precincts for Manual Tally. You will be asked to take part in rolling the 10-sided dice used to randomly select precincts for the Manual Tally.
- Observe the conduct of the One Percent Manual Tally; this is the manual audit of the vote counting process after the election. During this process you will observe teams of four manually tally the ballots from the randomly selected precincts. These precinct boards have specific roles. One team member calls out the voted contest, one team member observes and the two other team members tally what is heard. If any discrepancies are noted, a supervisor is consulted. If there is valid vote, it will be noted in the discrepancy log and manually adjusted in the Tally Room.
- Watch the secure return and processing of voting equipment.

Feedback

The Elections Office strives to continually improve the conduct of elections. Your participation in the Election Observer Program contributes to this goal. The Elections Office encourages observers to call, write, email, or meet with us and offer suggestions on how we can better serve the public. The Chief Elections Officer and the Elections Manager have had round table meetings with returning observers to listen to their recommendations for improvements to internal elections processes. Some of these recommendations have changed the way we do things, some were unworkable, and others remain under consideration for the future.

County Contact and Voting System Information

Contact:	Narda Barrientos, Election Supervisor
Phone:	650.312.5365
Email:	nbarrientos@smcare.org
Vendor & Voting System:	Hart InterCivic eSlate Voting System

We ask that you meet with the Election Supervisor if wish to participate in the Election Observer Program to ensure that you are fully aware of the timing of activities, the locations for those activities, and have the ability to assign an election expert to explain the process being observed and answer questions.



Rules for Election Observers San Mateo County

Observers may:

- Observe the proceedings at the polls, including the opening and closing procedures.
- Obtain information from the precinct index that is posted near the entrance.
- Make notes and watch all procedures.

View all activities at the central counting site on Election Day, including the:

- Election Day Call Center (EDCC)
- Internal Voter Phone Bank
- Vote by Mail Signature Verification and Processing
- Ballot Removal Process
- Ballot Duplicating Process
- Election Night Tally Room Processes viewed through Computer Monitors
- Election Night return of JBCs, containing the electronic ballots cast on memory cards, Paper Ballots voted at the polls and Vote by Mail ballots dropped off at the polls
- Election Night return of Red Supply Cases

View the canvass of the vote activities following the election including the:

- Selection of Precincts for the One Percent Manual Tally
- The One Percent Manual Tally process
- View ballot processing for the mail and provisional ballots returned at the Polls on Election Night.
- Ask questions of poll workers, Elections personnel or voters at the polls.
- Ask questions of supervisors at the central vote count site at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo.

Observers are responsible for:

- Checking in at each site, whether at a polling place or the central counting site.
- Wearing an identification badge.
- Maintaining a professional manner while observing the election processes.

Observers may not:

- Interfere in any way with the conduct of the election.
- Touch any voting materials or equipment or sit at the official worktables.
- Converse with voters (within 100 feet of the entrance to a polling place) regarding the casting of a vote, or speak to a voter regarding his/her qualifications to vote.
- Display any election material or wear campaign badges, buttons or apparel.
- Wear the uniform of a peace officer, a private guard, or security personnel.
- Use cellular phones, pagers, or two-way radios inside the polling place and/or within 100 feet of the entrance of the polling place.
- Talk to central counting site workers while they are processing ballots.
- Touch election personnel.
- Eat or drink at the polls or the central counting site.
- Assist in operations at any polling place.



Warren Slocum

Chief Elections Officer & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

40 Tower Road
San Mateo, CA 94402
phone 650-312-5222
fax 650-312-5348
email registrar@smcare.org
web www.shapethefuture.org

SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATION

August 30, 2010

[merge field – name]
[merge field – address 1]
[merge field – address 2]

Dear [merge field – salutation]:

As your San Mateo County Chief Elections Officer, I am committed to an open and transparent election process. We have instituted procedures, policies, and a public information campaign to help voters better understand what is involved in the conduct of an election in San Mateo County to ensure the accuracy, security and reliability of the vote. It is my sincere hope that through these efforts we will increase voter confidence in the process.

To provide greater access and transparency, we provide the public with an Election Observer Program. This program allows interested parties to witness the conduct of elections from beginning to end. I am writing today to invite members of your organization to participate in this program as observers in this very important Gubernatorial General Election cycle.

Some of you have participated in previous elections as an observer, and for this, I am most grateful. There are many items of interest for observers including the processing of vote by mail and provisional ballots, polling places voting, the central vote count, and the official canvass.

We have published a comprehensive Election Observer Guide and it is available on www.shapethefuture.org. You can find it under the Resources tab in the Publications section. The guide reviews the processes, the code sections and county procedures that have been developed to ensure the security and accuracy of the process.

If your organization would like to participate in the Election Observer Program, please contact our Elections Supervisor, Narda Barrientos, at (650) 312-5365 or email her at nbarrientos@smcare.org to register as an election observer. Please respond by, Friday, September 3, 2010.

Thank you for your interest and your commitment to fair, open, and secure elections.

Sincerely,

Warren Slocum
Chief Elections Officer &
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

Enclosure: Rules for Election Observers



Warren Slocum

Chief Elections Officer & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

40 Tower Road
San Mateo, CA 94402
phone 650-312-5222
fax 650-312-5348
email registrar@smcare.org
web www.shapethefuture.org

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

November 2, 2010

TO: Precinct Inspector

FROM: Warren Slocum
Chief Elections Officer & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

SUBJECT: ELECTION OBSERVER INTRODUCTION LETTER

This letter introduces _____, who is an Election Observer for the November 2, 2010 Gubernatorial General Election. As you know from attending the Election Officer training classes, observers are one of many components of an election that help to make it more transparent and secure. Election Observers are invited to observe activities related to an election, including visiting polling places.

During their visit, observers may ask you to explain operations and/or procedures. Please extend every courtesy to them as you would any voter. However, no person, including observers, may interfere with the act of voting or the operation of the polling place.

If you have any questions before, during, or after observers have visited your precinct, please call Lupe Sanchez at 650.312.5389.

Thank you for your cooperation and your terrific service to our County's voters.